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**KIRBY-KRAZED**  
**COMICS FANZINE**

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Roy Thomas on  
Jack Kirby—from  
1947 to the 1990s!



**No. 170**  
July  
2021

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**On Our Cover:** We were knocked out when Mark Halperin, co-chairman of Heritage Auctions, through Roy's manager John Cimino, sent us a scan of this never-published 1990s drawing by the incomparable Jack Kirby, showing Jack himself and the ever-lovin', blue-eyed Thing surreptitiously menaced by Dr. Doom and The Red Skull. And the Joe Sinnott inking was the icing on the cake! This illo spurred RT into finally doing what he's been threatening to do for years—namely, devote an issue of A/E to The King. Our thanks to Heritage Auctions (HA.com), the ultimate source for this all-but-unseen treasure. [Thing, Dr. Doom, & Red Skull TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.; other art © Estate of Jack Kirby.]

**Above:** One of the great (and last) co-creations of the deservedly legendary Joe Simon & Jack Kirby team was the hero of Bullseye #1 (July-Aug. 1954), who began life at the pair's own doomed Mainline imprint, but whose final two issues were published by Charlton after Mainline went under. Bullseye and Boys' Ranch are rightfully considered classic Western comics of the late Golden Age. [TM & © Estates of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby.]



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FIRST PRINTING.



This issue is dedicated to the memory of  
**Jack Kirby**



# A Jack For All Seasons

**A**s I say in my article that begins on p. 47, I've been a fan of Jack Kirby's art and concepts since at least 1947, when I was six or seven years old. Back then, of course, his byline was always shared with his partner, Joe Simon, so few people knew just who did what in that talented twosome... nor did we worry much about it.

Kirby's work and influence have been a part of this magazine at least since founder Jerry G. Bails' third spirit-duplicator issue of the then-hyphenated *Alter-Ego* [Vol. 1] (Fall 1961), wherein he adapted a "Simon + Kirby 1941" figure to illustrate an essay on the 1944 *Captain America* movie serial. In addition, Jack became the first pro artist ever to send Jerry a drawing for inclusion in the fanzine: The first photo-offset issue, #4 (Fall 1962), printed a wonderful pencil illo of the Thing (inked by Jerry), holding up a sign that plugged *A/E*. (See p. 15.)

A few years ago, TwoMorrows publisher John Morrow asked me a question that took me aback: "If TwoMorrows didn't have *The Jack Kirby Collector*, do you think you'd be featuring Jack more in *Alter Ego*?" My answer was a resounding yes; the only reason there haven't already been *several* issues devoted to the work of the guy Stan Lee dubbed "The King" is that TwoMorrows' flagship title is totally built around Kirby, and I didn't figure there was much left for *A/E* to say about a man celebrated thus far in 80 editions of a mag named for him!

Still, I figured that sometime, someday, there *should* be an *Alter Ego* that was centered around Jack. But I dillied and I dallied for

years, since so many other pros and concepts vied for attention. The notion of a Kirby issue of *A/E* was consigned to the back burner of my over-stretched mind.

And then my manager and friend John Cimino sent me a scan of a Kirby drawing that was being auctioned off, and which had been brought to his attention by Heritage Auctions co-chairman Mark Halperin. It depicted both Jack and his (to me) greatest Marvel Comics creation, the Thing, sharing a laugh as Dr. Doom and The Red Skull attempted to sabotage them. It was even inked by Joe Sinnott, the ultimate *FF* embellisher. When I learned that illustration had never been printed, I told John Morrow that I'd like to make that art the cover of an entire Kirby issue. John immediately gave his blessing, and I set about to line up material that didn't simply duplicate what had already appeared in *TJ/KC*. Thanks to the efforts of Will Murray, Barry Pearl, Nick Caputo, Aaron Caplan, John Cimino, Robert Menzies, Michael T. Gilbert, Peter Normanton, Mark Lewis, P.C. Hamerlinck, and a host of generous scan-senders, this became a wall-to-wall Kirby issue. Even more so than #169, this is a one-subject issue—and the subject is the greatest super-hero / action artist in the history of comicbooks.

Yes, we're sorry to lose, for the second issue in a row, both the letters section and John Broome's memoirs—but it had to be done.

For Jack was an artist for all eras, and it was high time we made certain that everybody knew that *we* knew it, too!

Bestest,

*Ray*

**COMING IN AUGUST #171**

## PAUL GUSTAVSON An Artist Of QUALITY! (Not To Mention TIMELY & CENTAUR!)

- Cover by GUSTAVSON, spotlighting some of his greatest artistic creations!
- RICHARD ARNDT interviews son TERRY GUSTAFSON (and no, that "F" *isn't* a typo!) about his fabled father, who in the 1940s drew *The Angel* for Timely/ Marvel... *Fantom of the Fair* & *The Arrow* for Centaur—and *Human Bomb*, *The Jester*, *Midnight*, *Rusty Ryan*, *Alias The Spider*, & even *Plastic Man* for Busy Arnold's Quality Comics Group! Profusely illustrated—with some of the most breathtaking art of the Golden Age!
- ROY THOMAS on ABRAHAM RIESMAN's controversial biography *True Believer: The Rise and Fall of STAN LEE*—the full, unfettered, fact-checking version of the online article carried on *The Hollywood Reporter* website on Feb. 23, 2021!
- Plus—FCA spotlights Fawcett's *Mighty Midget Comics*—MICHAEL T. GILBERT on "Frankenstein Unstitched!" featuring BOB POWELL—JOHN BROOME— & several *surprise features!* (I.e., they'll even be a surprise to *us*, as soon as we figure out what they are!)

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[Midnight, Jester, Human Bomb & Plastic Man TM & © DC Comics.]



# THE SECRET KIRBY ORIGIN OF IRON MAN

JACK KIRBY, DON HECK, Ol' Shellhead,  
& Marvel Comics

by Will Murray



Jolly ol' JACK KIRBY



Debonaire DON HECK

## Heavy Metal— Early Editions

**N**ow an essential Marvel Universe super-hero, in the beginning Iron Man struggled in late, struggling to find his rightful place in the Marvel Universe, ultimately becoming one of the few spinoffs of Marvel's fantasy titles whose own comicbook title has run uninterrupted to this day.

The origins of the character are complicated, and many behind-the-scenes details have either never been fully reported or are in dispute. According to Mark Evanier (friend and early-1970s assistant to Jack Kirby), who got the story from the artist himself, Kirby created the character design for Iron Man and brought it to Stan Lee sometime prior to the creation of Thor, Spider-Man, and Ant-Man. If verified, this may date from the period during which he brought in the original version of Spider-Man. Little if any thought was given to who the man inside Iron Man's bulky armor would be. Kirby's concept sketch ultimately became the cover to *Tales of Suspense* #39 (March 1963).



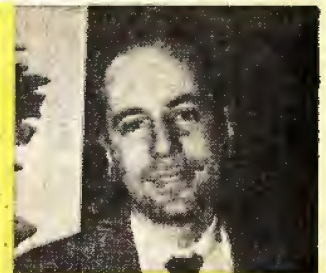
### The Usual Suspects

The Jack Kirby-penciled, Don Heck-inked cover of *Tales of Suspense* #39 (March 1963), flanked by the four men credited with bringing the future "Golden Avenger" to life, as pictured in the 1964 *Marvel Tales Annual*. Will Murray says that Heck claimed to have done a bit of redesigning of the armor, with editor Lee's tacit permission, when he inked Kirby's pencils. Thanks to the Grand Comics Database.

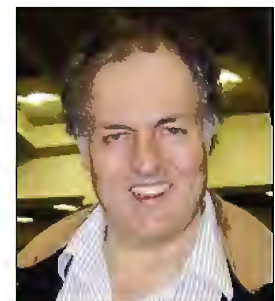
[TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Smilin' STAN LEE  
'Writer/Editor  
Bullpen Boss



'Laughin' LARRY LIEBER



### Mark Evanier

in a photo from his  
informative website  
[www.newsfromme.com](http://www.newsfromme.com).  
Since the 1970s, Mark has  
had an enviable career in  
first comics, then TV.



According to Mark Ellis, who later worked with Heck at Millennium Comics, "Don told me that when he was given the first 'Iron Man' story to pencil and ink, as well as Jack Kirby's original design of the armor, he had problems with the helmet and the 'metal mini-skirt.' His words. So, he made some slight alterations in both, making Iron Man's helmet less like a gun-turret and changing the skirt into something closer to trunks. He said he did this mainly to make it easier for him to draw, but he also felt it streamlined Jack's original armor design, which nevertheless continued to be featured on the covers of *Tales of Suspense*."

Among Heck's modifications was replacing the bullet-shaped helmet with an oval one that had a neck, jutting jaw, and skull-like look, complete with a sinister griled grin. He also dropped the sheet-metal kilt and simplified other elements.

While these changes helped, they did not eradicate the difficulties in animating the cumbersome character for his origin story. Heck had such difficulty drawing Iron Man's rigid armor that he petitioned Lee to let him further modify it for the second story.

"Don said he suggested to Stan a more astronaut/space-suit kind of thing... much more streamlined that didn't have as much look of weight to it," Mark Ellis recalled to me.

A concept sketch was reportedly produced, but Lee rejected it, preferring to stay with the Kirby-as-modified-by-Heck design.

Unfortunately, that origin story misfired. Goodman didn't care for it, especially the scene in which the powerful Iron Man is temporarily knocked down by having a steel filing cabinet thrown at him. Lee or Lieber covered for that misfire by indicating that the cabinet had been weighted down with rocks. Ironically, Goodman reportedly wondered why Lee hadn't assigned Kirby to the kickoff story.

"The first story was not well liked in the office," Mark Evanier told me.

Not surprising, coming as it did from a publisher who once complained that he never made any money off the three Rs of science-fiction: "rockets, robots, and rayguns."

This, and the lack of Kirby dynamics, apparently caused "Iron Man Is Born!" to be delayed at least a month. According to its job number, X-51, the first "Iron Man" story was drawn at the



### Skirting The Issue

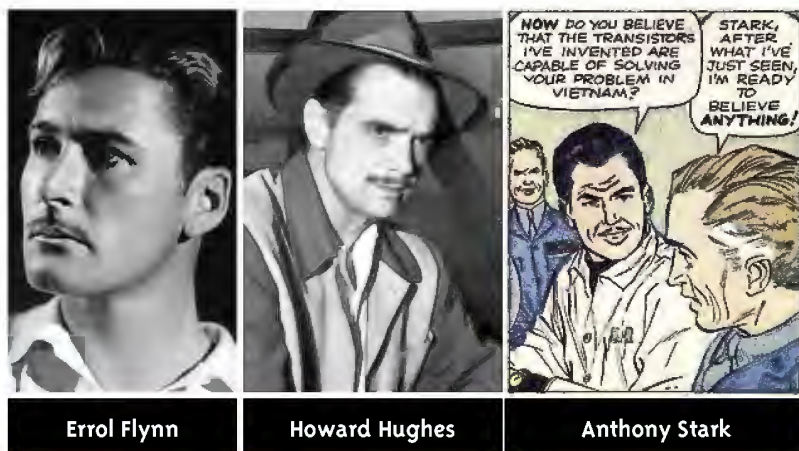
This eighth page from the "Iron Man" intro in *Tales of Suspense* #39 is the first to feature several panels of the brand new armored hero, sporting the Heck-designed metal "trunks" in place of the "metal mini-skirt" Kirby had given the character. Artist Heck also gave the helmet a more oval shape, with several other changes in what passed for its "face." Story by Lee & Lieber. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

same time Jack Kirby was doing *Incredible Hulk* #5, and between *FF* #10 and #11, which makes it contemporary with January or February 1963 cover dates. By that reckoning, the origin should have debuted in *Tales of Suspense* #38, last surviving fantasy title without a hero strip. Instead, it appears to have been held up at least one month, and finally appeared in issue #39, dated March 1963 and going on sale the same December day as *Amazing Spider-Man* #1.

### Kirby Redux

So disappointed was editorial with the "Iron Man" origin story that Larry Lieber was taken off all the super-hero strips and Jack Kirby was tasked to continue the feature, despite his busy schedule, in hopes of salvaging it.

Heck recalled Lee breaking the news to him this way: "You did a great job, Don. Kirby's doing the book from now on." (Of course, Kirby was only going to pencil the series, not script it. More about that in a moment.)



Errol Flynn

Howard Hughes

Anthony Stark

Handsome and super-popular film star Errol Flynn and the dashing inventor/aviator/magnate Howard Hughes were both men after whom Anthony Stark might have been modeled, moustache and all; it's not impossible that each influenced the look of the man inside Iron Man's armor. The panel from *Tales of Suspense* #39, provided by Barry Pearl, is the work of writers Lee & Lieber and artist Heck. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]